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## WHEN WE CANNOT BE NEUTRAL

Our political neutrality does not commit us to spiritual indifference. There are issues greater than the triumph of this or that nation in arms. War did not create them, nor can conferences of the powers settle them. They are born of conflicts in our deepest souls. To face them in the spirit of neutrality would be to advertise our partisanship with the forces making for moral and religious decay.



There is the issue as to the foundations on which international peace can rest. Shall it be mutual trust or mutual fear? Is it true that a treaty is worth no more than a nation's ability to enforce its provisions? Must nations always distrust nations? Is every world-power except the United States by temperament and choice morally defective?

Answer these questions in the affirmative and civilization is a meaningless tragedy—an evolution with brutality as its goal and brutality its reliance.

Answer them in the negative and there is no excuse for refusing to undertake the adventure of establishing peace, not only with, but upon, honor.

There is no third alternative. To trust a man only as long as he fears you is to play the savage. To trust him because you believe him to be as honest as you are yourself is to play the gentleman.

And if need be, it is better for a nation, as well as for a man, to suffer like a gentleman rather than to succeed like a savage.

Can we be neutral over that issue?



There is the issue as to whether the principles of Jesus can be extended to nations or must be limited to individuals.

This is not to question the legitimacy of a police force, municipal or international. Criminal nations like criminal individuals should be restrained, and, if need be, punished.

The real issue is the nature of our religion. If Christianity is concerned only with the morality of individuals; if it can only rescue brands from the burning, but has no power to put out the fire; if it can promise only heaven and not the kingdom of God, we certainly have a very different religion from what we need—a religion doomed to disappear with the advance of ethical idealism.

Can one be neutral about such an issue?



There is the issue as to the church. Is it to be an agency of the state—a civilized medicine-man praying for the triumph of its nation's armies—or is the church to be, as it never has been, an agency of good-will, the means of socializing the spirit of Calvary, the school of Christ wherein is taught the spiritual internationalism of the kingdom of God?

Theoretically there is only one answer to such questions, but practically there has been no uniform appeal of the church for peace that involved sacrifice rather than a war. We have been taught to pray for peace with "honor," but we have not been taught to pray for peace that meant the sacrifice of national policies that were unjust.

But the church cannot pray nations out of difficulties when it has not taught them to give justice to their rivals.

If God cannot forgive an unforgiving individual, can he forgive an unforgiving nation?

Will the church teach this elemental lesson in social ethics?

Can we be neutral on this issue?



The gist of the matter is this: Are we really serious when we say we take Jesus as Lord and Example?

Can men, facing a world in arms, a spiritual order discarded, a Christianity discounted because it dares hope for human brotherhood, be neutral over this issue?